

**Dr. Peterson**

**Reception for Ernest Scheller Jr.**

2 p.m. Friday, Sept. 21, 2012, LeCraw Auditorium

Today it is our pleasure to honor and publicly thank Roberta and Ernest Scheller Jr. It is a day to celebrate his legacy, a lasting investment in educational opportunities for others, and specifically, within the Georgia Tech community.

For 100 of its 127 years of existence, Georgia Tech has provided business education. It started with the School of Commerce in 1912 and the name, scope, and organizational structure have changed many times during the years to meet the changing needs of students and the business community. None of the changes over the past century are as transformational as the Scheller gift. When fulfilled in December 2013, it will be the largest single cash gift made in Georgia Tech's history. As many of you may know, Georgia Tech is a national leader in many areas, but the one that I am the most proud of is our leadership position among public institutions in terms of the percentage of alumni who give back to their alma mater. Literally fifty cents on every charitable dollar in Campaign Georgia Tech is given by an alumnus or alumna.

Through their generosity, the Schellers have set a new standard in leadership giving. The announcement of the gift was initially made at our annual retreat for the Georgia Tech Foundation and the Campaign Georgia Tech steering committee this summer. After a moment of stunned silence, the crowd erupted in applause and cheers. They immediately wanted to know more about Ernie Scheller, a man who is part of Georgia Tech's past and is shaping its future. He was an enterprising industrial management major at Tech in the late 40's and early 1950's, graduating in 1952. While his father paid his \$400 tuition per semester (Ernie, it's slightly higher now), it was up to him to find ways to pay his room and board. He joined ROTC and the Georgia Air National Guard. He worked as a table manager at a fraternity house and sold advertising in a student publication to make ends meet. After his military service, he joined his father's

business, Silberline (Siber has a short I, like “silver”). After his father’s death, he transformed the business into global leadership within its market. Ernie Scheller says that two traits instilled in him as a Tech undergraduate helped him overcome his father’s death and expand the family business: perseverance, and persistence. He also made it a priority to create numerous opportunities for his employees, as well as others in the community, to earn their college degrees. In an interview of Georgia Tech’s alumni magazine, he said “I feel I can benefit those who come after me more by making educational opportunities available than any other thing I can do.”

Throughout its history, Georgia Tech has benefited from the wisdom and foresight of its leaders, the hard work and enterprise of its faculty and students, the dedication of its staff, the success of its alumni, and partnerships with other individuals and organizations, who believe in Tech and want to invest in our future, and more importantly in the future of generations of students to come. Today you are seeing a living example of that.

Ernie Scheller’s impact, while significant for the newly-named Scheller College of Business, also has the potential to inspire the larger Georgia Tech community to boldly envision a future of globally renowned excellence and quality. Ernie, thank you for your vision, your commitment, and your investment in this and future generations of Scheller College of Business graduates. This is the gift of a century.

And now, it is my pleasure to introduce the chancellor of the University System of Georgia, and a friend of Georgia Tech, Hank Huckaby.